



HJ0068 Engrossed

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1 HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 68

2 WHEREAS, During Operation Iraqi Freedom, Pentagon  
3 officials discovered a trove of thousands of centuries-old  
4 artifacts from Iraq's Jewish community in the basement of  
5 Saddam Hussein's intelligence service headquarters; and

6 WHEREAS, These artifacts were improperly seized by force  
7 from their rightful owners by the regime of Saddam Hussein,  
8 which then stored them in a flooded basement, most likely in an  
9 effort to marginalize the culture and history of Mesopotamian  
10 Jews; and

11 WHEREAS, The artifacts were brought to the United States in  
12 2003, where they were carefully cleaned, preserved,  
13 photographed, and displayed at the National Archives; and

14 WHEREAS, The United States Department of State has  
15 announced its plans to return the Iraqi Jewish Archive  
16 collection to the government of Iraq in the summer of 2014,  
17 claiming the Iraqi people are the rightful owners; and

18 WHEREAS, More than 40 American Jewish groups have expressed  
19 their deep misgivings about returning the artifacts to Iraq,  
20 citing "uncertain conditions" in Iraq and calling for the  
21 artifacts to be given to the synagogues of Iraqi Jews around

1 the world; and

2 WHEREAS, The Pentagon official who discovered the  
3 collection, Harold Rhode, has likened the prospective return of  
4 the artifacts to "giving the personal effects of Jews killed in  
5 the Holocaust back to Germany"; and

6 WHEREAS, Religious documents and artifacts such as these  
7 are sacred and should properly be returned to the Jewish  
8 communities from which they were stolen; and

9 WHEREAS, The United States Senate has unanimously passed  
10 Senate Resolution 333 calling for the United States to  
11 renegotiate the return of the Iraqi Jewish Archive collection  
12 to Iraq; and

13 WHEREAS, United States House Resolution 505, which echoes  
14 United States Senate Resolution 333, was introduced into the  
15 United States House of Representatives; therefore, be it

16 RESOLVED, BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
17 NINETY-EIGHTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ILLINOIS, THE  
18 SENATE CONCURRING HEREIN, that we urge the United States  
19 Department of State to renegotiate with the Government of Iraq  
20 the provisions of the original agreement in order to ensure  
21 that the Iraqi Jewish Archive collection be kept in a place

1 where its long-term preservation and care can be guaranteed;  
2 and be it further

3       RESOLVED, That we urge the relevant authorities to house  
4 the Iraqi Jewish Archive collection in a location that is  
5 accessible to scholars and to Iraqi Jews and their descendants  
6 who have a personal interest in it; and be it further

7       RESOLVED, That suitable copies of this resolution be  
8 delivered to the President of the United States, the Secretary  
9 of State of the United States, and the members of the Illinois  
10 congressional delegation.